

training he had been sent to the front and had often been under fire. I asked him, "How are things at the front?"

"If they do not make peace soon, there will be a revolution." He spoke loudly, paying no attention to the people around us.

I said quietly, "Let's go somewhere else. Too many people here. . . ."

"You mean the police?" he interrupted. "We spit on them in the trenches. A soldier at the front does not give a damn for the officers either. What can they do? Whoever tries to gag the men will get the first bullet."

This defiance was alien to Sechkin's character, and for a moment I thought he was drunk. I took him to a quieter street where we could talk freely. He was sober but excited, eager to talk about what he had gone through. Senseless death under fire, aimless movements of troops, foolish orders, and—treason, treason everywhere! I asked myself how many other soldiers believed they had been sent to their death by traitors. Obviously the whole army could not be in Sechkin's state of mind, but it was also clear that in some sectors of the front, disintegration had reached a stage at which the army had ceased to be an obedient tool. If this spirit spread further, it would end the regime of absolutism.

The tide was mounting and a new storm was approaching. A decade earlier the revolution had been crushed by the armed forces because there was no unity in its camp. Now the people had another chance. Now the oppressors were losing control over the armed forces. What would the new revolution bring to the people?